



STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES IN ENGLISH SPEECH PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this mixed method research is to describe the students' perspectives, the students' challenges and how they overcome those challenges in English speech program. Approximately 68 students filled the questionnaires and 15 of them were selected for the interview. The instruments used in this study were a closed ended questionnaire consisting of 22 questions adapted from the public speaking competence rubric proposed by Schreiber, Paul and Shibley (2012) and the interview guideline adapted from Abubakar, Atmowardoyo and Korompot (2017). The findings of the study revealed that the English speech program was an essential program to increase the students' speaking ability (65%). Moreover, the program gave advantages to the students (51%). It also found out that the program mostly challenged the students to choose the appropriate topic to the audience (69%) and to use good language (59%). From the interview, it found out that the students made the following efforts to overcome the challenges, namely making independent preparation for the performance, doing practice with friends and having consultation with classroom coordinators.

Keywords: *challenge, public speaking, English speech program.*

INTRODUCTION

Public speaking becomes a necessary skill for people in this modern era. It is required whether in the social environment, academic environment or the workplace. Public speaking is seen as one of the most fundamental skills in any discipline. Dobrzinskiene (2016) states that

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public speech takes a big role in communication in this modern society which is one of the aspects that measures someone's quality. Similarly, Chollet et al. (2015) assert that public speaking is one of the interpersonal skills required in any career and social life. Moreover, The ability to talk in the public highly determines someone's improvement in his career, building good relationships, reducing conflict and easily doing negotiations.

Schreiber and Hartranft (2017) state that many people are aware of the importance of public speaking, but most of them avoid speaking in the public place. They add that even though public speaking is not a favorite activity to do, people can learn how to deliver the speech well. Therefore, English speech program is an essential program for students in order to prepare them to have adequate public speaking skill.

Previous studies presented the challenges and difficulties found by students in speaking English. A study done by Dobrzinskiene (2016) found that some of the respondents said that their anxiety disappeared once they finished their public speech, various uncontrollable psychological experiences such as irritability or worry. It was also found that only a few students had willing to talk in public and a very limited number of them tended to experience pleasant feelings while standing and talking in front of the audience.

Similar study was conducted by Quyen, Nga and Nguyen (2018). The findings showed that the students found both internal and external challenges, especially the latter ones regarding the limitation of English speaking environment and extracurricular activities. There were some other findings such as lack of students' vocabulary, speaking skill strategies, a limited number of native teachers and limited English speaking environment as the most inhibiting factors for students' speaking skills.

The study conducted by Moulida (2019) revealed that the challenges found by students relate both linguistics and nonlinguistic aspects. The linguistic aspects were fluency, pronunciation and lack of vocabulary, while non linguistic aspects were feeling nervous, anxious, afraid of making mistake, the vocabulary loss, and afraid of being center of attention. Besides, there were some solutions in order to cope the challenges such as often practice, listening to others talking, reading and learning vocabulary, maximum preparation and practice speaking English regularly.

Another study relating to this issue was done by Abubakar et al. (2017) who investigated the students' challenges in undertaking an

English speech program at the Islamic Boarding School of Indonesian musholla mosque association in Makasar. The results found that the participants considered the three most significant problems that challenged the students; peers generated anxiety, monotonous design of the program, and a speech by rote. Moreover, there were two actions done by the students to tackle the problems; consulting to supervising teachers and preparing everything independently.

Those previous studies investigated the challenges in English speech program which were focused on problems and difficulties. However, in Aceh, there is a very limited research about this issue, whereas there are many boarding schools in Aceh providing English speech programs as one of the school extracurricular activities. This is a missing space that the writers expected to fill through this study. It is a crucial object to be explored more to find out the students' perspectives about English speech program, the challenges and how the students overcome the challenges in order to help other students and improve the program itself.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public Speaking

Public speaking is an activity to convey the idea to the spectators (Schreiber & Hartranft, 2017). Slagell (2009) explains that public speaking is delivering a speech to assign ideas to the audiences which refers to communication activity. Public speaking is a common activity done in the society with different types of public speaking depending on contexts, for instance in the classroom, office or any other public places through various types and functions. According to Triastuti (2006), there are three types of public speaking; speaking to inform, speaking to persuade, and speaking to entertain.

Public Speaking Competence

Some people successfully speak in front of audiences with meaningful thoughts, while others fail to do it even after practicing many times. To be an effective speaker, we have to know the competency of public speaking. There are eleven speaking competencies based on public speaking competence rubric (PSCR) according to Schreiber et al. (2012), namely useful topic, engaging introduction, clear organization, well-supported ideas, closure in conclusion, clear and vivid language, suitable vocal expression, corresponding nonverbal, adapted to the audiences, adept use of visual aid, convincing persuasion.

Function of Speaking

Various studies have been tried to classify the function of speaking in human interaction. According to Brown and Yule (1983) and Jones (1996) as cited by Richards (2006), there are three categories of the function of speaking including talk as interaction, talk as transaction, and talk as performance. Basically, talking as interaction is a talk mainly attending a social function. It focuses more on the speakers and how to present themselves than to the message, for instance, when people meet, greet each other, get in a small conversation, and recount their experience due to being friendly and comfortable with the people. Talking as transaction primarily focuses on the message rather than the participants and how the social interaction used. The message should be understandable while accuracy is not a priority. It is such as classroom discussion, conversation in a shop, asking or giving opinions and planning to do something with friends or family, etc. The third function of speaking is talking as performance which refers to public talk. The talk conveys the message systematically and accurately such as debate, class debate, giving a lecture, public announcement and speech.

Types of Speech Delivery

There are several types of delivery to be successful in delivering a speech based on needs and occasions. Jaffe (1995) and Kearney and Plax (1996) affirm there are four modes of speech delivery.

a. Manuscript Delivery

Manuscript delivery is delivering the speech by reading the whole text which is written including the detailed information, specific point or exact number. This delivery model provides the most security for the speakers because they only need to read the written text. It is usually used for formal occasion such as ceremonial, radio or television reporter, etc. On the contrary, it is not appropriate for most public speaking including classroom speeches.

b. Memorized Delivery

Memorized delivery is delivering the speech by memorizing the written text. This delivery model is similar to the manuscript mode where the speakers write the script, but it lets the speakers practice repeatedly until the whole text is remembered on their mind. Then, it allows the speakers to move around and use gestures rather than holding the script. Nevertheless, this mode has some disadvantages in which the new speakers often forget the words that they had memorized and this condition will build the fear. Besides, the speech is delivered in unnatural

communication where the speakers keep remembering the words of the speech.

c. Impromptu Delivery

It is delivering the speech which has no formal preparation or sometimes a person is suddenly called to speak on the stage. Only some people who are able to do this kind of delivery mode because it needs much knowledge and experience so the speakers can deliver the speech directly without preparation. However, then if the speakers are able to deliver through this mode, they look smart and credible.

d. Extemporaneous Delivery

In contrast to impromptu delivery, this type of delivery requires the speakers to prepare the headline or main points before delivering the speech. Then, they practice delivering those points with different words usage. This mode delivery is focused on the idea of going to be delivered rather than the exact words written on the script. Thus, the speakers can talk normally and uses gestures and body movements flexibly. Therefore, it seems like a natural conversation in which the speaker can respond to the audience spontaneously.

As indicated above, there are four different types of delivering a speech. None of those types of delivery a speech is the best over the other. Each type of speech delivery depends on the event of the speech which has its advantages and disadvantages. Some people tend to memorize the speech script in order to be well prepared. Sometimes, they forget the word or sentence which have been memorized before the performance which builds nervousness. Otherwise, some people are able to do extemporaneous delivery or impromptu delivery.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study applied a mixed-method research. It is combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches by collecting and analyzing two kinds of data to be investigated and find out more understanding about the case of the study (Creswell, 2014).

Research Participants

This study was carried out at Oemar Diyan Islamic Boarding School on the tenth grade students. A number of 68 respondents participated in filling out the questionnaire. The respondents were chosen by applying the purposive sampling technique. The students who have enrolled the English speech program for four years were deemed to fulfill the criteria

of the subject in this study. Then, the writers further chose 15 of them to be interviewed because of the limit of time.

Research Instrument

The instruments used in this study to collect the data were the questionnaire form and the interview guideline. The questionnaire with close-ended form was to answer the first and second research question asking the students' perspectives about English speech program and the students' challenges in undertaking it. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) emphasize that a close-ended question in the questionnaire provides limited choices to answer and uses simple, clear, and unambiguous language. Besides, the interview was done to collect the third research question asking the students' effort to overcome the challenges.

Technique of Data Collection

In collecting the data, the writers distributed the questionnaires to 68 students of the first grade of Senior High School of Oemar Diyan Islamic Boarding School. The questionnaire was given for two different classes which consisted of 34 students in each class. The writers collected the data for four days; two days for distributing the questionnaire and two days for interviewing the participants. Before distributing the questionnaire, the writers asked permission from the headmaster. Then, the writers made an appointment with the students for having a meeting in order to fill the questionnaires. After selecting the schedule, the researchers met the participants in the classroom. On the third and fourth days, the researchers did the interview with 15 selected students.

Technique of Data Analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed by statistical descriptive way by using percentage formula. Moreover, the data obtained from the interviews were analyzed by using interactive model analysis proposed by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014). There are three steps to analyze the data namely: data condensation, data display and drawing and verifying conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Result

The researchers present the result of the study in three sections: students' perspectives about English speech program, students' challenges, and students' efforts to overcome the challenges.

1. Students' Perspectives about English Speech Program

- English Speech Program increases students' speaking skill

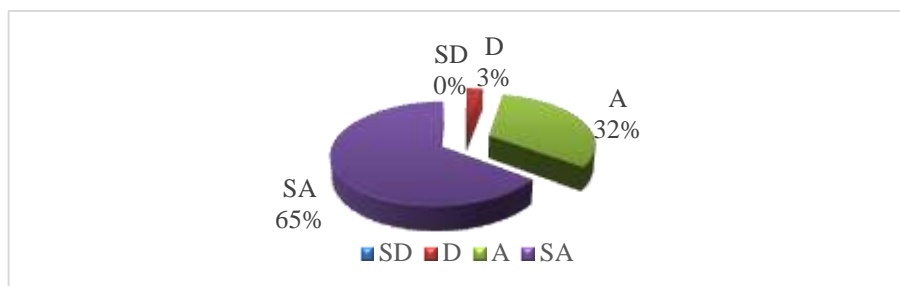


Figure 1. English Speech Program Increases Students' Speaking Skill

Figure 1 shows that 97% of the students had positive perception towards English speech program and only 3% of the students had negative perception about the English speech program. These percentages indicate that most of the students perceived themselves as having positive perception about the English speech program that can improve students' speaking ability.

- English Speech Program gives many advantages

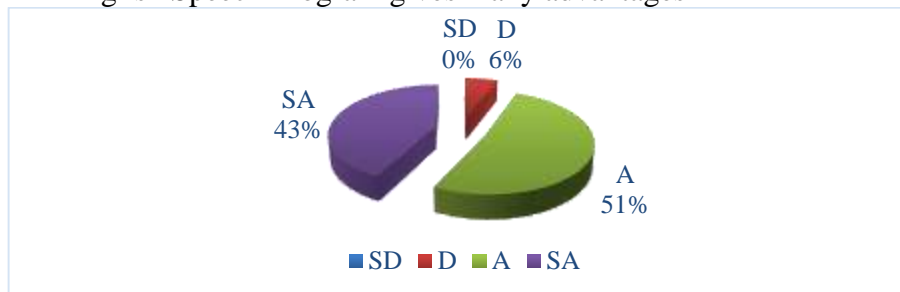


Figure 2. English Speech Program Gives Many Advantages

Figure 2 reports the English speech program gives many advantages to students. It shows that 51% of the students agreed and 43% of the students strongly agreed to the statement. There were only 6% of the students disagreed with the statement. It means that almost all of the students' believed that the English speech program gives many advantages to the students.

2. Students' Challenges in Delivering the Speech

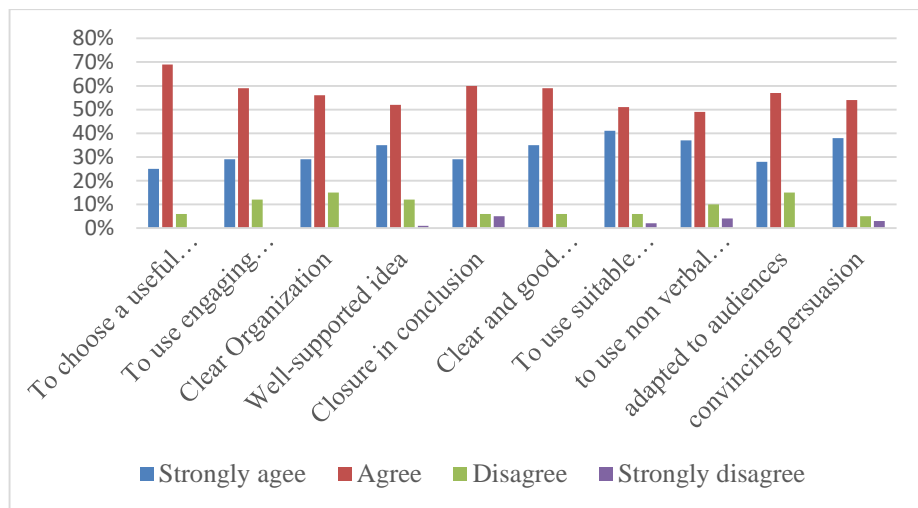


Figure 3. Students' Challenges in Delivering the Speech

Figure 3 shows the challenges found by the students in delivering the speech. Those challenges are adapted from Public speaking competence rubric proposed by Schreiber et al. (2012). The figure shows that the most challenging for the students was to choose a useful topic to the audience. The second most challenging point for them was closure in conclusion, while using engaging introduction was as challenging as using clear and good language.

3. Students' Efforts to Overcome the Challenges

▪ Practice

The most important things pointed out by the students was practice. They thought that practice made someone able to perform better. As Participant 3 said *"I practice before delivering the speech. I practice in front of 2 or 3 friends in the room."* Similarly, Participant 4 said *"the action that I do usually I prepare myself such as checking the language*

and grammar. We have to practice a lot to improve ourselves.” Participant 4 also confirmed that to avoid being of feared or nervous speaking in front of many people, he imagined talking in an empty classroom or nobody was in front of him. It was also helpful for him. He said *“Imagine there is nobody in front of us when delivering the speech.”*

▪ **Comprehend the Text**

Furthermore, ten out of fifteen students tended to understand the topic rather than memorize the text which was aimed to avoid losing the idea when delivering the speech if the students focused on the text. The students elaborated what they understood to the audience. As Participant 7 said:

“The solution that I do is usually when I come forward, I don’t want to memorize the text, I prefer to understand the text well and then I just use my language. It is a challenge for me because I have to think how to deliver in a good sentence to be understandable. To be able to present the text well, firstly, I usually write the text by myself. I ususally look at the Indonesian text, then I translate into English, then I explain by my own word.”

Participant 11 said understanding the text was better than memorizing it. She said *“I think it is not enough if we only share what we have memorized based on the text, but we have to speak and explain by our own word or explanation to make the speech more fruitful.”* In addition, another student confirmed that she comprehended the text well before she performed in order to be able to use suitable expression. Participant 15 said *“I try to understand the topic or text well before I speak in the class. Then it can reduce my nervous feeling and I can use suitable expression when delivering the speech.”*

On the contrary, one of the students believed that both memorizing text and understanding the topic were helpful for her. As Participant 6 said, *“To overcome the challenges, beside memorizing the text, I also understand the topic. So if I forget the text, I can explain based on my understanding about it.”*

▪ **Reading**

Another student believed that vocabulary was a crucial element in delivering the speech. A dictionary was a tool for her to find out the word

and pronunciation. The vocabulary could also be enriched through reading English story. By knowing the vocabulary and English knowledge she affirmed that she could speak English well and this effort reflected her performance in delivering the speech. As Participant 10 said:

"To be able to speak in a good language, I look at a grammar book and the dictionary to see the word and the pronunciation, then I memorize the word. Beside, I like reading English story. It can also enrich my English vocabulary. To train my self confidence, I try to tell the speech well based on my English knowlegde. If we have good English, we will be able to expalin it well and speak confidently. I deliver the speech based on what we already understand. We have to push ourselves and believe that we can do it and it is interesting."

The data of interview showed that the students did various actions to deal with the challenges. Some of the students tried to overcome those challenges by themselves such as choosing the interesting topic, understanding the material, practicing before performance and checking the word and grammar. Some other students asked their friends and senior students' help to check the language used and the pronunciation.

Discussion

▪ ***Students' Perspectives about the English Speech Program***

The researchers found that the first grade students of Oemar Diyan Senior High School were highly motivated in undertaking the English speech program. It is shown that the students were conscious of the importance of the English speech program which could increase the students' speaking ability. Practicing public speaking is quite important for students.

Furthermore, the result also revealed that the students got many advantages by participating the English speech program. The students learned more knowledge about Islam and social, public speaking skill such as choosing an appropriate topic, controlling anxiety, managing audiences, attracting the audience and using body language and building self-confidence. According to Morgan and Nelson (2015) practicing public speaking trains someone to reduce speaking anxiety and increase self-confidence, be able to deliver the message as effectively as possible, provide more useful feedback to others, excite and engage people,

strengthen critical thinking skills, succeed in college, get hired and advance in his career and empower yourself to be a leader.

This finding was similar to the previous study done by Abubakar et al. (2017). The study found that the English speech program was a helpful media for the students where they learnt new vocabulary, knew how to be a good public spaker, and grew as independent and confident individuals. Therefore, based on the finding of this study and a previous study focusing on the English speech program, it can be concluded that this program is important for the students in order to increase students' speaking ability and prepare the students to be a public speaker.

▪ ***Students' Challenges in Undertaking the English Speech Program***

Based on the result of the study, there were many challenges found by the students in undertaking the English speech program. Some challenges found by the students were related to the linguistic aspects such as pronunciation and grammar and nonlinguistic aspects such as choosing a topic, convincing and attracting the audience, talking without nervous, being of self-confidence and missing the idea. Likewise, the previous study conducted by Abubakar et al. (2017) also found the similar result. It found that the students encountered the challenges mostly related to linguistics: pronunciation and vocabulary, anxiety, monotonous design of the program and speech by memorization.

▪ ***Students' Efforts to Overcome the Challenges in Undertaking the English Speech Program***

Challenge is a difficult task which tests someone's skill or ability and needs an effort to success. The challenge whose core purpose is to enable someone and needs an effort to do things successfully (Turner, 2017) gives a chance to the success and growth. From the result of interview, the researchers found that there were various efforts done by the students to overcome the challenges in undertaking the English speech program. Most of the students believed that practice was a key to the success in delivering the speech.

In regard to the pronunciation, the students regularly checked the word on a dictionary and asked the language mover center or a senior student. Furthermore, checking both a grammar book and dictionary were the ways to be able to use a vivid language and good grammatical sentence so that the students can revise their script before the performance.

The result of the interview also found that the students delivered the speech that fitted into the students' background, level of the students, and their audience. Besides, the students also chose a different topic with the previous performances done by other students and supported with the examples and current issues in order to attract and convince the audience. This is in line with Schreiber et al. (2012) who assert that a good public speaker should deliver a useful topic, well-supported ideas, clear and vivid language adapted to the audience to convince them.

Moreover, when the researchers interviewed the students over how they overcame with the loss of the idea, some students confirmed that they usually comprehended the topic well. To be able to comprehend text the students should have prior knowledge about the topic; otherwise they will be difficult to comprehend the topic. Adams and Bruce (1982) say that *"without prior knowledge, a complex object, such as a text, is not just difficult to interpret: strictly speaking, it is meaningless"*.

Conversely, some students memorized the script to make them easier to speak without accidentally thinking a new sentence needed. However, sometimes when someone preferred to memorize the text, he was focused more on the word rather than the core messages of the speech and could not interact with the audience well. These situations could create unnatural conversations. Thus, memorizing is not suggested for the students. The speakers have to be familiar with the topic and do not memorize the words because focusing on the words let the speakers under pressure and increase their anxiety and then will not be able to react to the audiences (Graspy, 2017). In addition, the students assumed that the vocabulary and grammar knowledge were needed by the students to deliver a clear explanation. In addition, they believed that good English allowed them to speak confidently and deliver the speech well.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

English Speech Program is an important program in order to improve students' speaking ability. It can be seen from the students' perspectives about the importance of English speech program that 97% of participants pointed out that it was an important program for them and 91% of them got many advantages by participating the program.

There were various challenges found by the students in undertaking English speech program. The students were challenged to choose a suitable and appropriate topic to the audience, explain in a clear

explanation, and deliver the speech clearly and confidently. Besides, they were also challenged to use a good language and pronunciation. Moreover, there are also some other challenges that were found by the students that came from the class advisor such as score and reward.

The students did some actions to solve the challenges in undertaking the English speech program. The students independently prepared the materials by themselves without asking for help from anybody. They chose a suitable topic, analyzed it, checked the language and practiced delivering the speech before the performance. Some other students practice with their friends to be assessed. The other students ask senior students' help to check the language and the pronunciation.

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